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courage is contagious

Viewing cable 06BEIRUT2538, TFLE01: LEBANON,S YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ON

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06BEIRUT2538**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BEIRUT2538	2006-08-05 13:38	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Beirut

Appears in these articles:

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VZCZCXRO1542
PP RUEHAG RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK
DE RUEHLB #2538/01 2171338
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 051338Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4909
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 002538

SIPDIS

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/SINGH/HARDING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/03/2016
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [IS](#) [LE](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: TFLE01: LEBANON,S YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ON
HIZBALLAH, AMERICA, AND THEIR FUTURE

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On August 3 PolOff hosted a dinner at his residence in the Embassy compound. The guests were young professionals in the government, media, and private sectors. They are disappointed that in their view Israel is losing the war against Hizballah. These educated, Christian professionals describe Hassan Nasrallah as a man of vision, commitment, and leadership. They are questioning the U.S., commitment to Lebanon and warn that the U.S. is losing ground among its friends in Lebanon. Among this group, the hope for a future that does not reflect Lebanon's bloody past is diminishing. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C/NF) PolOff hosted a dinner in his residence on the Embassy compound to maintain contact with young professionals in the public, private, and media sectors. The guests included Ms. Mona Saliba, a Lebanese Broadcast Station (LBC) reporter who covered the first two weeks of the conflict in southern Lebanon; Ms. Nayla Tueni, the daughter of assassinated MP and Al Nahar publisher Gebran Tueni; Mr. Rabi El Chaer, an advisor to the Minister of Transportation; and Mr. Selim Abu Samra, an entrepreneur in event-planning and management. The guests car pooled to overcome the current fuel shortage and ignored threats of strikes in Beirut to venture to the Embassy compound for the evening. Amidst the stress of economic, social, and security crises, this exchange was an opportunity to remain engaged with less heard voices in Lebanese society.

¶3. (C/NF) The group was from the middle to upper middle class, Christian community living in the Mount Lebanon region. For them, Israel is an enemy until it signs a peace treaty with Lebanon. They want, however, to see Israel succeed in weakening Hizballah. These democratic-minded individuals agree that there is no room for armed political parties and admit that prior to the conflict the Lebanese government could not disarm Hizballah via political or military means.

¶4. (C/NF) After over three weeks of fighting, the group is disappointed with what Abu Samra calls Israel's military unwillingness to fully commit itself to its political goals. Israel wants to disarm Hizballah, but is not ready to make the massive ground incursion that is needed to do so. In their view, it is evident that Israel is losing this war because large numbers of rockets are still being fired into Israel, no villages in the south have been really taken by IDF, and Hizballah is winning the media battle.

Nasrallah is
&The Man

¶5. (C/NF) Hassan Nasrallah received high marks among the group. Although they do not agree with his political philosophy, he is described as a man of vision, commitment, and nerve. Tueni exclaimed that Nasrallah is the only man in the government. They applauded his calm and confident demeanor in press appearances during the past weeks. They also cited his detailed planning of underground tunnels and military strategy as a tribute to his leadership ability. Abu Samra joked that he would gladly organize a leadership seminar in which Nasrallah would be the keynote speaker.

¶6. (C/NF) Tueni remarked that the single worst disaster that could result from this war is killing Nasrallah. The group agreed that Nasrallah is moderate in his thinking when compared to other Shia leaders. Chaer reminded the group that Nasrallah promised that his weapons were only to resist Israeli aggression and not to be used against other Lebanese. Thus far his words have held true. Chaer also believes that House Speaker Nabih Berri's condemnation of the July 30 attack on the United Nations House by Hizballah supporters came at the request of Nasrallah among others.

¶7. (C/NF) Both Tueni and El Chaer mentioned Hasham Safedine as the probable successor to Nasrallah if he is killed. Safedine was described as exponentially more radical than Nasrallah and would pose a serious threat not only to Israel, but the Christian, Sunni, and Druze communities in Lebanon. In his thirties, Safedine is a member of the internal Hizballah Assembly and head of the political council of Hizballah.

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Questioning U.S.
Commitment

¶8. (C/NF) The group questioned USG commitment to Lebanon. They commented that the United States has simply sat back and watched as their country is being destroyed. PolOff reminded the group of the USG efforts to help MEA evacuate its fleet from Beirut and the continued efforts to supply electricity plants with fuel. Abu Samra commented that these efforts are appreciated but completely overshadowed by the popular theory that Israel is acting at the command of the U.S. (Comment: Nasrallah reinforced this perception during his August 3 national television appearance. End Comment.) Saliba, who has gained wide recognition for her in-depth coverage of the conflict on LBC, stated that the good will that the U.S. has worked so hard to gain in the past years is quickly diminishing among all communities in Lebanon. The "carte blanche with which Israel is operating in Lebanon is seen to be issued by the U.S., she cautioned.

Losing Hope

¶9. (C/NF) These young, educated, productive citizens are losing hope for the future of Lebanon. They are unified in their admiration for beautiful Lebanon, but question their ability to continue living here if the present fighting is not the final conflict in Lebanon's long history of violence. A war took my childhood and I am afraid wars will take my adulthood, said Saliba. Only months ago she was offered a position with Al Hurra in Washington D.C., but refused the position because of the new opportunities that were on the horizon in Lebanon. She now regrets that decision. Tueni, who is still mourning the assassination of her father in December 2005, feels compelled to remain in Lebanon. She admits that she thinks about moving to France, where she has resided in the past, to live in peace. However she realizes that she is forced to remain in Lebanon to fulfill her responsibilities with her family, Al-Nahar Newspaper. Abou Smara, who also carries British citizenship, will give Lebanon another chance. This will be the third time that his business suffers from conflict, but for better or worst he hopes this is the last war.

Comment

¶10. (C/NF) The gathering was held before the Israeli bombing attacks against bridges along the coastal road in heavily Christian areas of Mount Lebanon. PolOff called the guests for their views now that the war has hit closer to home. They believe that strikes in the Mount Lebanon area will strengthen Nasrallah's support among Christians and diminish already weakening support for the U.S. in traditionally pro-American areas.

FELTMAN